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Hastings (Lady) R

IN the life of the lady ELIZABETH HASTINGS, \* we meet with an extraordinary instance of the happy effects, which christianity has upon those who, by joining with the calls of grace, become willing to give up their whole hearts to follow its dictates. This pious lady's first principle appears to have been the glory of God, and the purity of her own heart; next to this, a continual solicitude and labour to hold all her capacities, all her power, and all her fortunes continually upon the stretch for the good of all men, weeping with those that wept; rejoicing with those that rejoiced; given to the hospitality; distributing to the necessities of saints, and to those that were less so, having joy at the conversion of a sinner, or the least appearance of it; but the care of all her cares was the stranger; the fatherless and the widow; the needy, and he that hath no helper; the lame, the halt

\* A very amiable account is given of the extraordinary charity, piety, &c. of this lady, by Sir RICHARD STEEL in the *Tatler*, No. 42, under the character of ASPARTUS. She died in 1739.

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and the blind.----And in this place, says the author of her life, what shall I say! or how can I expect to be believed! The bent of her spirit ever lay towards these: She had a share in all their sufferings; she would often converse with them, and enquire into their history with as much poverty of spirit, as they were in of outward condition; she would study their particular cases, and put them in the way of better welfare; some of these were ever in her house, and frequently in great numbers; and it was no neglect of her's, if any one went away unrelieved with meat, physic, raiment or money; many of these that lived remote, had yearly allowances, and large sums issued out into distant parts of the kingdom. Her still larger applications were fixed pensions upon reduced families, the maintenance of her own charity-school, contributions to others, &c. &c. She was a great mistress of all parts of oeconomy with respect to what she laid out upon herself; her body, she knew, was the temple of the Holy Ghost, which the believer must possess in sanctification and honour, wherefore her support of it in meat, drink

drink and sleep, was ever bounded by necessity; for they that walk in the spirit, as this pious lady did, die progressively to every vanity, and dare not indulge the hurtful gratifications of the flesh, but labour to keep it under, as knowing it to be the seat and repository of their most dangerous and deadly enemy. Nevertheless she sought not her salvation by the force of her alms, highly affluent as they were; for these, though necessary duties, yet, she well knew, were not the charity of the gospel; not that charity which the apostle Paul so divinely describes at 1 Cor. xiii. 3. She was sensible, that Jesus Christ must be revealed in the heart, before we can have any just claim to discipleship, and that it is his ruling and bringing all things there in subjection to his spirit, that was the great and only principle of christian charity.----She knew that the great scene of Religion lay within, in the right government of the heart; accordingly her eye was ever upon her heart, to see that all its principles were cleansed from evil mixtures, had no taint from self-love, were not sullied with vain-glory; her care was to observe the tendency of all its mo-

tions, how its struggles weakened in sinful desires, endeavouring continually to nourish it by acts of faith in the blood of her Redeemer. She had well learnt to overcome evil with good, to suffer long, and be kind, to bear all things, and if ever by speech, carriage or otherwise, she suspected that she had disturbed the spirit of any, she had no peace with herself, till she had taken care for the recovery of theirs.

Much more might be said of the endowments and virtues of this true disciple of Jesus Christ, more especially of her patience under sufferings and resignation to the divine will; under the painful dispensation she passed through, during the last eighteen months of her life, occasioned by a cancer in her breast, which notwithstanding she suffered it to be separated from her body, yet in the end occasioned her death. This painful operation she not only bore with patience, but even rejoiced, that she was counted worthy to suffer, knowing her Saviour had suffered in his flesh, and that as sufferings was the way to his perfection, it must also be the way to ours, this being the declared condition of our being glorified with him,

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the trueſt marks of adoption, and the moſt ſovereign medicine ſent from Heaven for our cure. Theſe truths this truly pious lady was ſo well acquainted with, that ſhe declared, “ She would not wiſh “ to be out of her preſent ſituation, nor “ exchange it for any other at any price.” Thus with great meekneſs and tranquillity, with chearfulneſs ſcarce to be believed, in perfect ſerenity and freedom, ſhe continued her uſual life, till the time appointed for the operation. When that time of deep trial came, ſhe ſhewed no reluctance or ſtruggle, but endured all even without complaint; only towards the end ſhe drew ſuch a ſigh, as the compaſſionate reader who reads this may do. Hence it appears, how thoſe that follow the Lamb with ſincerity, are endowed with virtue and power reſulting from the true ſpirit of his religion, which others are unacquainted with. The night following the operation was not indeed a night of much ſleep, but of truly ceſtial reſt; a night of thankſgiving to her God, for the viſible demonſtration of his power in her, and about her, for his ſtretched-out arm in her great deliverance, for the  
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bountiful provision he had made for the body and soul, holding all the powers of her spirit exercised in acts of love, gratitude and adoration. She sooner than was expected got upon her feet, and with every improvement that could be made, into the same way of life that she had been in before, wholly intent upon the glory of God, and the good of her fellow-creatures. But the distemper only repressed for a time, rose up with new malignity, to the much greater affliction of numbers in the world, than of her that bore it; for she had now been, for some time, in the school of affliction, exercised with its sharp discipline, and found its salutary effects. Under these sentiments her hope was full of immortality, and the eternal weight of glory, now in full view, made all her afflictions light. In this near and certain approach of death, her cherishing warmth, like that of the sun, tho' it might be most felt by those nearest, yet also reached those at greater distance; witness the great number of letters she writ, and dictated to others, when she became unable to write, full of sweet counsel, having for their argument the blessed-

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ness of piety; pressing home the necessity of it, and setting forth its true nature; witness also the number of persons of all conditions, who resorted at her house, to behold the living power of religion in her, and to be benefited by her wisdom. With some of these she continued in heavenly conferences as long as she had strength. Her life was near drawing to its last stage, but her lamp and her life must be extinguished together, and she must occupy till her Lord comes.---Accordingly she convened her household, to strengthen and enforce every thing that she had done or shewn them before, by her dying counsels; and would have extended this care to the whole village, but was restrained by the physician. “ The path of the just is as a shining light, “ which shineth more and more unto “ the perfect day.” “ The truly religious, whose evidences for Heaven are “ clear, rational, and well grounded, “ have a tide of joy springing up in their “ minds beyond expression; something “ more moving and satisfactory than any “ one can imagine, but they that perceive it.---When they are just entering “ upon

“ upon the promised land, the splendor  
 “ of the eternal day dawns upon them,  
 “ and shines as through the breaches of  
 “ their shattered bodies, and raises in  
 “ the inward man such earnest of happi-  
 “ ness, such foretastes of joy, as enables  
 “ them to pass through the valley of  
 “ death in peace and triumph.” As  
 death drew near, she was in transport,  
 quite melted down with the impression  
 of glory, broke out with a raised accent  
 into these words: “ Bless me, Lord!  
 “ What is that I see! Oh! the greatness  
 “ of the glory that is revealed in me,---  
 “ that is before me.” And some time af-  
 ter she had so said, she fell asleep.

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